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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQ

IRAQ

¶1. "U.S. mired in a mess of its own making"
Contributing foreign editor Eric Margolis commented in the conservative tabloid Ottawa Sun (8/24): "First, President George W. Bush, VP Dick Cheney and a coterie of neo-conservatives led by Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle misled Americans into an unprovoked, unnecessary war by claiming Iraq was about to attack the U.S. with nuclear and biowarfare weapons. This was a grotesque lie.... Next, the White House gravely misread the strategic situation by swallowing neo-con assurances the 'liberation' of Iraq would be a cakewalk and oil bonanza. Last week, Iraqis responded to Bush's foolish challenge...by blowing up UN headquarters in Baghdad and inflicting serious sabotage on Iraq's oil infrastructure. These attacks show the U.S. has got itself into a truly awesome mess in Iraq. Far from easily plundering Iraq's oil wealth, U.S. occupation troops - almost half the U.S. Army's combat forces - are now under siege, at a cost of \$1 billion US weekly. Bush has literally stuck his head in a hornet's nest in Iraq and is now getting royally stung. He, his scandalously inept national security advisers, and the media's so-called 'Iraqi experts' failed to comprehend that a U.S. occupation would be a frightful, expensive, bloody mess - a disaster that was totally predictable. Worse, the U.S. occupation is clearly creating the kind of violence and car bomb terrorism that Bush used as an excuse to invade Iraq. Call this a terrorism perpetual motion machine. Iraqis who resist U.S. occupation are branded 'terrorists' and lumped into Bush's crusade against Islamic militancy.
When the U.S. finds itself unable to crush Iraqi resistance, it will blame neighbouring Iran and Syria for 'fueling terrorism,' and may attack them. Tehran and Damascus thus have every reason to stir the pot in Iraq to tie down American forces and make it less likely the U.S. will next invade them, as neo-cons are urging.... Worse for the U.S., Iraq may be emerging - like Afghanistan - as a new, pan-national cause for the Muslim world.... President Bush has conveniently provided anti-American militants and fanatics across the Mideast with an ideal target: the U.S. army in Iraq.... Each passing day makes Bush's ill-fated invasion of Iraq increasingly resemble Lebanon's ugly civil war in the 1980s.... The U.S. finds itself in a disturbing analogue of the long Lebanese civil war, with confused American troops, like Israeli soldiers in Lebanon, not knowing why they are there or who is the enemy and venting their frustration on civilians. Protracted guerrilla warfare eventually turns even the best-disciplined troops into brutes, and corrupts entire armies. The very neo-cons who fathered this disaster are now calling for more American troops to be sent to Iraq."

¶2. "Baghdad bombing puts U.S. back on the defensive"
Columnist Jonathan Manthorpe observed in the left-of-center Vancouver Sun (8/22): "It is an unpleasant truth to admit, but whoever launched the truck bomb attack against the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad on Tuesday has reason to be pleased with the initial results of their bloody work.... However, the purposeful targeting of the UN, whose prime commitment now and for the past decade has been improving the lives of ordinary Iraqis, has rewritten the equation. The truck bomb announced that the coalition forces may be occupying Iraq, but they do not control what happens there. It said Iraqis should have no confidence that America, the UN or anyone else will be able to deliver on promises to rebuild the country on the basis of a sound civil society.... It is no coincidence that this escalation in the type of violence comes amid increasingly detailed reports of radical Islamic fighters slipping into Iraq from all over the Middle East to join the fight against the U.S.... An alliance of convenience is forming between these 'jihadis' (holy warriors) and the remnants of Saddam's secularist Baath Party. A result is the creation of a much more sophisticated command structure among the resistance guerrillas and a more coherent strategic objective.... In Washington, there is an

effort to grasp the truck bombing as an opportunity to persuade allies and others who were opposed to the war to now come on board. The administration of George W. Bush is very keen to make the occupation forces in Iraq more visibly international by drafting in contingents from such countries as India, Pakistan and even Japan. To that end, Secretary of State Colin Powell...was on Thursday working the corridors of the UN headquarters in New York.... Powell was hobbled, however, by an adamant refusal in the heart of the Bush administration to cede any military authority in Iraq or to give the UN any significant role in the reconstruction of the country.... Somewhat understandably, countries such as France and Germany which argued for international legality before the invasion, aren't rushing to assist Washington now.... Behind this too is the more mundane matter of money. The way things are structured at the minute, Washington is ensuring it will be American companies almost exclusively that get contracts to rebuild Iraq. But reports from Washington say the administration is reluctantly considering giving the UN some authority to share the contracts pie more widely. Because the alternative for the Bush White House probably would be increasing isolation in the midst of an unwinnable guerrilla war, it would be worth the money."

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